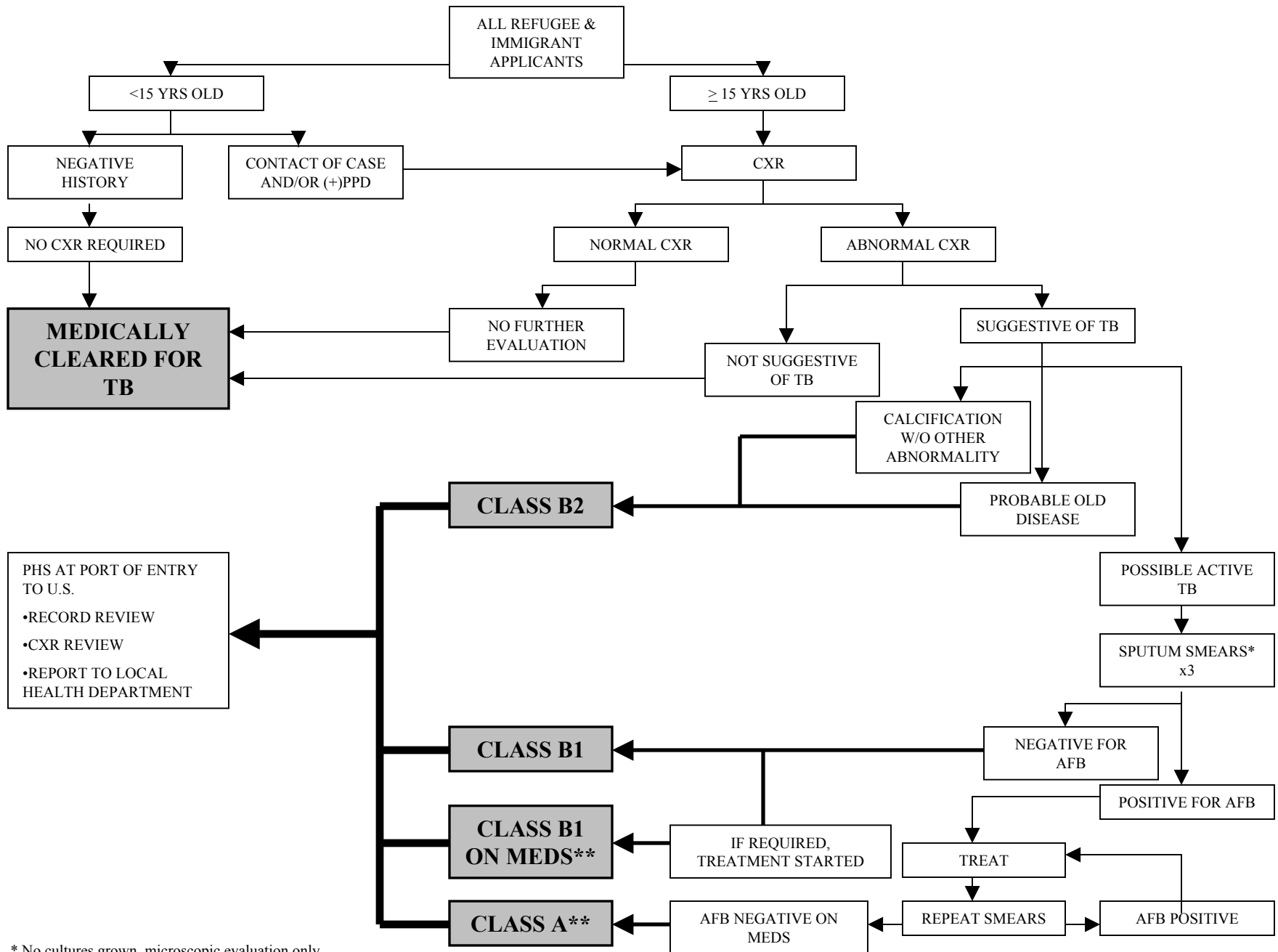


OVERSEAS MEDICAL SCREENING FOR TUBERCULOSIS



* No cultures grown, microscopic evaluation only.

** These arrivals enter U.S. with temporary supply of medications.

ADMISSION TO THE UNITED STATES FROM OVERSEAS AND MEDICAL SCREENING

CATEGORIES OF IMMIGRATION STATUS

Refugee: A refugee is a person outside their country who is unable or unwilling to return to his or her country of nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion. The U.S. sets priorities for U.S. resettlement and annual admissions ceilings. Individual cases are approved overseas by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Immigrant: An immigrant is a person lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the U.S. An immigrant may either arrive in the U.S. with an immigrant visa issued abroad by the State Department, or adjust status from temporary non-immigrant to permanent resident while in the U.S. by applying to the INS. Most immigrant visas are based on family relations or employment. Certain groups of immigrants are subject to a numerical cap.

Non-immigrant: A non-immigrant is a person admitted to the U.S. for a specified purpose and temporary period but not for permanent residence. Included are persons on visas for tourism or business, as well as students and temporary workers. The U.S. does not place numerical limits on most of these non-immigrant classes of admissions.

WHAT ARE THE MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ENTRY TO THE UNITED STATES?

U.S. immigration law states that overseas medical screening of immigrants and refugees must be carried out, with the general goal of excluding persons with communicable diseases of public health significance, persons with physical or mental disorders associated with harmful behavior, persons who abuse drugs or are addicted to drugs, or persons who are likely to become a ward of the state.^{1,2} The examination process includes physical examination and screening for tuberculosis (chest x-ray and smear, if necessary), sexually transmitted diseases, Hansen's Disease, HIV infection, substance abuse, and physical and mental disorders. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) establishes the examination protocol.

WHO COMPLETES THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION OVERSEAS?

The medical screening for refugee and immigrant applicants is conducted by physicians appointed by U.S. consulates and referred to as "panel physicians". There are some 800 panel physicians worldwide.

WHAT HAPPENS IF AN APPLICANT HAS AN EXCLUDABLE CONDITION?

Persons with excludable communicable diseases require treatment to render them non-infectious before a visa will be issued. Examples: (1) a person with smear positive tuberculosis will be treated until three consecutive smears are negative, (2) a person with syphilis will be fully treated. Persons with HIV infection or non-communicable diseases must be granted a waiver by the INS to continue the immigration process.

WHAT ARE THE LINKAGES BETWEEN OVERSEAS AND DOMESTIC SCREENING?

Public health departments in the U.S. are notified of certain arrivals from overseas to assure prompt follow-up. These include all persons with excludable conditions (Class A conditions) as well as Class B tuberculosis conditions (active, non-infectious [B1] or old, healed [B2] tuberculosis).

- Class A – require follow-up to complete treatment
- Class B1 TB – require further evaluation for diagnosis and treatment
- Class B2 TB – require further evaluation for diagnosis and treatment

All refugees are linked with comprehensive health assessment services through the Department of Public Health and local resettlement agencies. Findings from the overseas examination are reviewed and Class A/B conditions are further evaluated.

¹ Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990 and amendments (P.L. 101-649)

² Binkin NJ, Zuber PLF, Wells CD, Tipple MA, Castro KG. Overseas screening for tuberculosis in immigrants and refugees to the United States: Current Status. CID 1996;23:1226-32.